gatherings, after a death, the elder brother entreats the gods to bless the family, to prevent bad feeling, or strife, to give wisdom and strength to the new headman, that he may be successful in his rule over the village (1). 782

When some great misfortune is the occasion for this religious act being performed, the petition is preceded, or followed, by a regular *insulting* of the gods. There are two words used to designate this curious part of the prayer : *holobela*, or *holobisa*, to scold the gods, or *rukatela*, the actual word for "to insult." There is an instance of this strangely impertinent manner of addressing the gods in the sacrifice for the sick nephew (p. 396). These insults are generally uttered while the priest is squeezing the psanyi over the shoulders of his subordinates.

The last part of the prayer is *its sudden termination*, when one of the uterine nephews puts a portion of the victim into the officiant's mouth, thus "cutting his oration" (tjema). This is a true part of the ritual. When the victim is a hen, it is the gizzard, which has been half roasted during the long prayer, that is used for this purpose. The priest eats it, and so is the first to partake of the flesh of the offering.

Prayers to the ancestors do not show very much religious feeling, and are, at any rate, absolutely devoid of awe. Whilst 782 769 781 533 776

(1) *Music* plays no part in Thonga religious ritual. During the preparation of the offering those present often sing, but these songs are those which accompany the ordinary dances and bear no religious character. I only once heard of a true sacred chant. Mangomane, the distinguished dancer and musician who made his living by the exercise of his art in the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques (p. 187) told me that when he presided over the worship in his village, he used to *sing his prayer*. He gave me the words, but unfortunately not the notes. They are worth quoting :

"Let the meat not stick in your throats ! Eat, you chiefs, you ancestor-gods... They are coming (the oxen) ; they see me, whilst I mourn you, my father and my mother, whilst I remain outside, where I receive life from you, who are below ; I remain, I am a miserable wretch.

"The oxen are slain ! Slay the oxen ! Here they are. I mourn you. Let us eat them together, you father and mother. Give me life and give it also to my children. Let us eat these oxen which I possess, but I possess them for you. Let us not suffer from complaints of the chest here in our home.

"This is the song by which we accompany you, as you return below. Let us remain in good health."

At a given moment the uterine nephew answered by saying:

"I magnify you, my father ! You shall see me, father and mother !"

And all those present, seeing that they would have plenty of meat to eat, joined in a chorus of praise, clapping their hands.

782 sacrificing, the Natives laugh, talk in loud tones, dance, sing
769 obscene songs, even interrupt the prayer with their remarks,
781 and insult each other about family matters. The officiant himself
533 sits on the seat designated by the bones, and speaks in a monoto-
776 nous manner, looking straight in front of him with utter indifference. There is nothing in his demeanour which denotes fear. An exception must perhaps be made in the case of those members of the Makaringe family who clapped their hands during the prayer in the same manner as when saluting "bakonwana" (p. 402). They have as much respect for the ancestor-gods as for their relatives-in-law, and that is, indeed, saying much. I have heard that in the Maputju country people kneel down during the prayer. In Nondwane women alone kneel, whilst the men sit on their heels, the customary attitude in worship (1). If the gods were actually old people, still living, they could not be addressed with more familiarity. This leads us finally to consider in what the divinity of the ancestor-gods consists.

d) The Divine Nature of the Ancestor-Gods.

776 I have brought together in a preceding paragraph (p. 372-386)
769 all that the Natives say about their gods. Now let us return to them, after having studied the religious ritual, and ask : What

(1) The Ma-Lemba, that curious tribe settled amongst the Thongas and Vendas of Spelonken which has certain Semitic customs (I p. 73) are much more respectful towards their ancestor-gods. They have prayer meetings at which the old men of many families assemble together; one of them, he who knows the ancestors best, leads the others in prayer, "quoting all their mountains" viz. all the sacred hills where the ancestors have been buried, and at the end of each sentence they all answer : "hundjiii..." When the prayer is finished, they each raise an arm and say : "Amen !" This is one of the customs borrowed by them from the Semitic populations with which they came into contact in former times. When they heard Christians pronouncing the same word to conclude their prayers, they were very much astonished. One of them told me; "This shows that we were Christians formerly and have become back-sliders." One of their formulae when praying is as follows. "You, so and so and so, help us and enable us to reach Mudzimu." Mudzimu is the name by which they designate the Supreme Being in whom they believe and of whom they say : "All that you eat, it is Mudzimu who gives it to you!" If a child refuses to obey, they say to him : "Mudzimu will see you !" For them the ancestor-gods are but intermediaries between themselves and Mudzimu. They often call themselves Basilamusi, Moslems, and claim that there were Moslems belonging to their tribes (A ba ri ba ka hina).

APPENDIX III (See p. 428).

On Personal Religion amongst the Thongas.

781 769 The following facts prove that though ancestor-worship is above all a collective and ritual affair, religious acts of a personal and individual character are not wanting.

A young man of the Hobyana family told me that when he was still a boy, he was employed by his father to convey travellers over the river in a boat. He was accused by his brothers of stealing the money paid to him for this service. His brothers did not like him; they took from him the money which he received from the travellers and accused him of keeping it for himself and of deceiving the owner of the boat. One evening, as he was returning home after his day's work, he heard a great noise in the village ; people were speaking of him in angry tones. A Portuguese official had passed through the country some time before and had shown him kindness. He decided to run away and seek refuge amongst the Whites. The night was pitch dark when he arrived on the borders of a great plain. He felt very lonely and was seized by a terrible fear of this great, empty space which he had to cross. Then "another heart" told him to pray to the ancestor-gods to help him in his anguish. He remembered how his father used to *hahla*, and thought of saying "tsu." But he did not dare to pronounce the sacramental syllable. A feeling of shame (tingana) prevented him from doing so. However, he kneeled down, put the parcel containing his clothes under his left arm, crossed his hands before his breast and joined them (fumbarela). He decided not to address his prayer to his paternal ancestors, those of the Hobyana family, as it was his father and his brothers who were ill-treating him, but rather to those of his mother. One of these maternal ancestors bore a special relation to him, as his parents had named him after this ancestor, who had died without posterity and whose name they wished to "revive" (pfusha) in this way. The boy prayed as follows : "You, my ancestor-god, after whom I have been named, save me and lead me where I am going." While pronouncing these words, he kept his eyes towards the East, where the moon was just rising, and, adds the boy, "I felt a great peace and joy in my heart and continued my journey."

Another boy of the Mashaba family, going for the first time to work in Johannesburg, was suddenly seized by fear in the railway carriage,

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remembering that he had been told that the mines were full of water and that boys working underground contracted fatal diseases. Overcome by the idea that he was going to his death, he jumped out of the train at the third station after Komati Poort and began to walk in the direction of Barberton through the desert. Feeling tired, he lay down and tried to sleep. But he heard antelopes running about quite near him, saying "mpfi! mpfi!" — "If these animals were hyenas," thought he, "I should be lost." Then the idea came to him that he ought to call upon the paikwembu to help him, which he did without pronouncing the official tsu, saying: "My gods! Help me! Save me from dangers and from wild beasts! Keep me alive!"

One of my pupils of the Khosa clan had a great affection for his mother. He said that she frequently prayed in her hut when he was sick, asking the paikwembu to heal him (p. 412). She used to offer them a little of a special mealie pap, prepared with particular care, and to throw a pinch of ground tobacco on the threshold of the hut in the morning. When she was tilling her garden and felt very tired and unwell, she used to pray "according to what her heart instructed her to say."

An Inhambane boy told me that, when travellers cross the Inharrime drift, many take a little water in their mouths, say tsu, and pray to their ancestor-gods to take care of them in this dangerous passage. Though his father and mother were still living and it is the custom not to hahla before their death, he said tsu, as the others did.

At the Morakwen drift the river Nkomati is very broad, and when the South wind begins to blow in fury the ferryman who rows travellers across to the opposite side runs great danger. One of his relatives told me that when this happens, he spits out a little saliva (as an offering of bitterness) and says: "Tsu! Do not hate me! These heads are not mine," meaning: "The children I convey do not belong to me, and I should have a great responsibility towards their parents if they perished in the river." Another witness assured me that this ferryman also begged all those in the canoe to join in his prayer and to entreat their own ancestor-gods to save them.

A Native of the Manyisa country added: "Individual prayer undoubtedly exists! During the heat of battle, a warrior, feeling himself in great danger, will kneel down, plant his shield in front of him and invoke his ancestor-gods. Some have remained in this position so long that the enemy have been able to stab them while they were still kneeling."

Such spontaneous appeals to the ancestor-gods do certainly occur,

and this shows that ancestrolatry, notwithstanding its strongly ritualistic character, sometimes affords religious souls real help and relief. 781 769

When asked what they wish to obtain by their ancestor-worship, Thongas often answer : *Butomi*. This word comes from the adjective *ntomi*, to which is prefixed *bu*, the prefix of abstraction. *Ntomi* designates a man who is in good health, and butomi means above all *good health* ; but it has also a wider connotation and may well be translated by *life*. Life for the greater number is merely good health, plenty to eat, the possession of many children, material blessings ; but for the finer types it means something more ; it is the full happiness, to which they vaguely aspire and from which the moral element is not altogether absent. At least such is the impression I sometimes had when I heard them speak about butomi.

APPENDIX IV (See p. 450).

Additional Remarks on the idea of the Supreme Being and on Ancestor-worship amongst Bantus in relation to the History of Religion. 000

Much new light has been thrown of late years on the subject of the relation between ancestrolatry and the belief in a Supreme Being, a subject which remains one of the greatest problems of the History of Religion. In the paragraph which I devoted to this question in my first edition and which is reproduced in the second (p. 448), I refrained from attempting a definite solution of the problem of the order of priority of these two beliefs. I still believe that it is safer to maintain an attitude of reserve on the subject, as such a solution ought to take into account not only Bantus, of whom I know something, but the whole of primitive humanity. I should like only to add a few remarks which have been suggested to me by a comparison with some other Bantu tribes, and to put forward tentatively an explanation which may be applicable to the Bantu domain.

As already pointed out, the belief in a Supreme Being is found in various forms amongst all the Bantus, but it is perhaps nowhere more clearly defined than amongst the Ba-Ila, so minutely described by the Rev. Ed. W. Smith in his book, already quoted, on the Ba-Ila speaking people. *Leza* is designated by a number of typical praise-names : the Creator, the Moulder, the Constructor, the One who has no end, the Guardian the Giver, the One who gives and who causes to rot, the